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ABSTRACT

The characteristics of 18.2 million persons who participated in postsecondary education activities are described, based on the results of the Bureau of the Census' October 1982 Current Population Survey. Included are: participation rates of population groups and an unduplicated count of postsecondary students; a breakdown of students by type of goal of their education; and a description of the social and labor force characteristics of persons participating in each segment. The goals or objectives of students' education are classified as: (1) an academic degree; (2) a vocational degree, certificate, license, or other credential; and (3) continuing education courses taken for personal/job development, or for social or recreational reasons. For academic, vocational, and continuing education students, the following characteristics are reported: sex, race, age group, marital status, labor force status, and region. Appendices include the survey form; information on the source of the data and reliability of sample estimates, standard error tables; statistical tables; and definitions of students pursuing different types of educational goals as well as a breakdown of participation rates for specific groups of students (e.g., persons taking courses to obtain or renew an occupational license). (SW)

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Special report

National Center for Education Statistics

U.S. Department of Education
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement

Contact: Susan Hill

November 1984

Participants in Postsecondary Education: October 1982

In October 1982, 1 out of every 10 persons age 16 years and older participated in postsecondary education. This report describes the characteristics of the 18.2 million persons who participated in postsecondary education activities. It presents the unique types of data on postsecondary education that only surveys of individuals (as opposed to surveys of institutions) can provide, such as:

Section I	• participation rates of population groups and an unduplicated count of participants in postsecondary education
Section II	• a breakdown of postsecondary participants by type or goal of their education (as defined in appendix A, table 1): - working towards an academic degree, - working towards a vocational degree/certificate, - taking classes for reasons other than to obtain a credential (continuing education)
Section III	• a description of the social and labor force characteristics of persons participating in each segment

The data were collected from a sample of households by the Bureau of the Census in the October 1982 Current Population Survey (CPS).[1]

[1] See the appendixes for more information on the CPS questionnaire, the sample, methodology, and definitions of terms. The appendixes also contain the numbers on which all percents in this text were calculated, and a discussion of how to calculate the confidence intervals for the percents. Differences between two estimates were mentioned in the text only if the difference was significant at the 95 percent confidence level.

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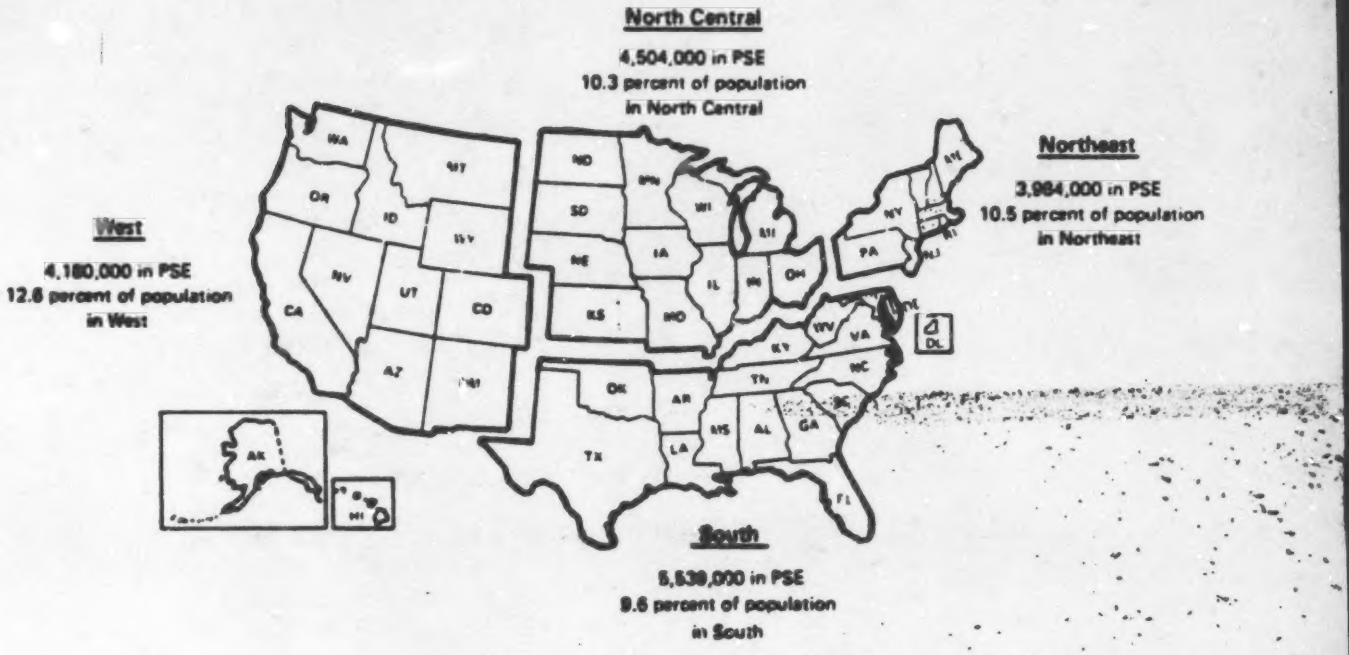
NCES 84-309

1. Population Participation Rates in Postsecondary Education

The region of the country with the highest proportion of the population participating in postsecondary education was the West. In this region, postsecondary participants accounted for almost 13 percent of the adult population (chart 1). Although a relatively large percent of the population in the West was involved in academic and vocational education, the percent who took continuing education classes was exceptionally high compared with other regions of the country (appendix table 2).

Chart 1. -- Postsecondary education (PSE) participants, by region of the United States: October 1982



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Among subgroups of the adult population there were some notable differences in participation rates. A slightly larger proportion of adult women (11 percent) participated in postsecondary education compared to adult men (10 percent). Although in age groups under 25, participation rates for men and women were similar, in age groups over 25, women had significantly higher participation rates than men. Among racial groups, white women and black women had higher participation rates than their male counterparts. On the other hand, women in the "other racial group" category[2] had a lower participation rate than men. Overall, persons in the "other racial group" category had a higher participation rate (17 percent) than both whites (11 percent) and blacks (9 percent). The low participation rate of blacks was primarily a result of a very low participation rate in the continuing education segment of postsecondary education (appendix table 4).

Single adults had a very high participation rate in postsecondary education (23 percent). By contrast, only about 6 percent of the persons who were or had been married before were participants. (This reflects to some extent the fact that many persons postpone marriage until their education is completed.)

The overview of participation rates in postsecondary education indicates that women, regardless of age, race, or marital status, have higher participation rates in general than their male counterparts. However, comparison of participation rates of women and men by type of postsecondary education shows that women have a lower participation rate in academic education, a similar rate in vocational education, and a higher rate in continuing education.

Type of postsecondary education	Percent of all women 16+ who participated in:	Percent of all men 16+ who participated in:
Academic	5.1	5.7
Vocational	2.3	2.1
Continuing	3.7	2.2

The participation rate in continuing education was higher for women than for men regardless of labor force status. Even among women and men who worked full-time, the participation rate in continuing education for women (5.2 percent) was almost double the rate for men (2.8 percent) (unpublished tabulations).

[2]This group is comprised of Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos.

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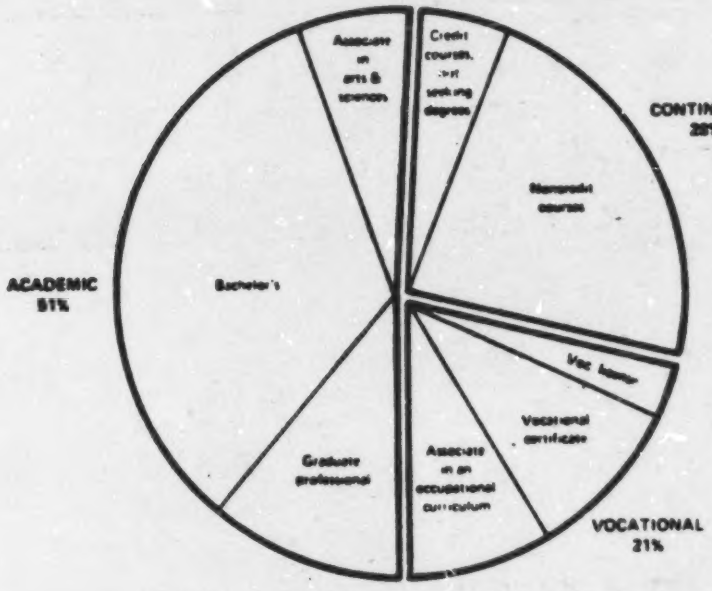
II. Participation in Academic, Vocational, and Continuing Education

In this analysis, the 18.2 million participants in postsecondary education were classified by NCES into three mutually exclusive categories based on their reported goal or objective of their education:

(1) an academic degree
(2) a vocational degree, certificate, license, or other credential
(3) courses taken for personal/job development, or for social or recreational reasons--not to obtain any type of credential (continuing education)[3]

In October 1982, 51 percent of all postsecondary education participants, or 9.2 million students, reported that they were seeking an academic degree. Another 21 percent of all postsecondary students said they were working to obtain a vocational credential, such as a certificate, license, or an associate degree in a specific occupational area. The remaining 28 percent were involved in continuing education, i.e., they were either taking non-credit courses, or taking college credit courses but not working for any type of degree (chart 2 and appendix A, table 1).

Chart 2. -- Distribution of postsecondary education participants by the primary goal of education: October 1982



[3]In order to provide an unduplicated count of postsecondary participants, persons who were involved in more than one sector of postsecondary education were only counted in one category, with precedence given in the order listed above. See appendix B for more information.

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Within each segment of postsecondary education, students were working toward different levels or types of credentials. Of the more than 9 million students in academic postsecondary education, 67 percent were pursuing a bachelor's degree. Another 12 percent were in an associate degree program studying a general or arts and sciences curriculum, work that is usually creditable toward a bachelor's degree. The remaining 21 percent were working for a post baccalaureate degree, such as a master's, doctor's, or first-professional degree (M.D., D.D.S, D.V.M., law, etc.).

Of the 3.3 million postsecondary vocational students, 44 percent were taking courses to earn a vocational certificate, and 43 percent were working toward an associate degree in an occupational curriculum. The remaining 13 percent were taking courses to obtain or renew a license.

Of the 5.2 million continuing education students, 83 percent were taking non-credit courses. The remaining 17 percent were taking credit courses but were not working for a degree. Although most continuing education students were taking courses for personal pleasure, development, or general education, 3 out of 10 students indicated they were taking courses specifically to improve their job skills (unpublished tabulation).

III. Characteristics of Students in Each Type of Postsecondary Education

This section describes the student composition for each type of postsecondary education in terms of sex, race, age group, marital status, labor force status, and region (chart 3).

Academic Students

Academic students were about evenly split between men and women. Blacks constituted 10 percent of all academic postsecondary students in October 1982, lower than their representation in the general adult population (11 percent). Although traditional patterns of college participation have begun to shift toward increasing enrollments of older students, the majority of students in academic postsecondary education in October 1982 were under 24 years old, never married, and not in the labor force. Of all academic postsecondary students, 67 percent were between the ages of 16 and 24, and another 23 percent were in the 25- to 34-year-old age bracket. Thus, 9 out of 10 students in academic postsecondary education were under 35 years old.

Almost three-fourths of the academic students reported that they had never been married. Another 22 percent of the total was comprised of married students, and the remaining 5 percent were divorced, widowed, or separated.

Almost half of all academic postsecondary students were not working -- 42 percent were not in the labor force (i.e., they were not employed nor looking for work) and 5 percent were unemployed (but were looking for work). Twenty-nine percent were employed part-time, and 24 percent were employed full-time.

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Vocational Students

Women accounted for over half (55 percent) of the 3.8 million postsecondary vocational students. Blacks represented 12 percent of vocational students at the postsecondary level. Like those pursuing academic degrees, vocational students at the postsecondary level were a rather young population. About half of all postsecondary vocational students were between the ages of 16 and 24, and about another quarter were 25 to 34 years old. Thus, persons under the age of 35 accounted for roughly three-fourths of all postsecondary vocational students.

Postsecondary vocational students were almost evenly split between those who had never been married and those who were or had been married. Two-thirds of all postsecondary vocational students were working either full- or part-time. Forty-four percent were full-time employees and 22 percent were employed part-time. Twenty-five percent were not in the labor force and 8 percent were unemployed.

Continuing Education Students

About two-thirds of the estimated 5.2 million continuing education participants were women. Blacks were substantially underrepresented in this segment of postsecondary education. While comprising 11 percent of the adult population, blacks accounted for less than 5 percent of all continuing education participants.

Unlike other segments of postsecondary education, only a small proportion (16 percent) of the participants in continuing education were 16 to 24 years old. The greatest concentration of continuing education students (32 percent) was in the 25- to 34-year-old group. An additional 22 percent were 35 to 44 years old, 14 percent were between 45 and 54, and 16 percent were over 55 years old.

Consistent with the age distribution of continuing education participants is the fact that nearly two-thirds of these students were married and 15 percent were divorced, widowed, or separated. Only about a fifth had never been married. Similarly, over half (57 percent) of continuing education participants were full-time employees and another 14 percent were employed part-time. About 4 percent were unemployed, while 25 percent of continuing education students were not in the labor force.

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Chart 3. -- Distribution of postsecondary students, by type of education and by sex, race, marital status, age group, labor force status, and geographic region: October 1982

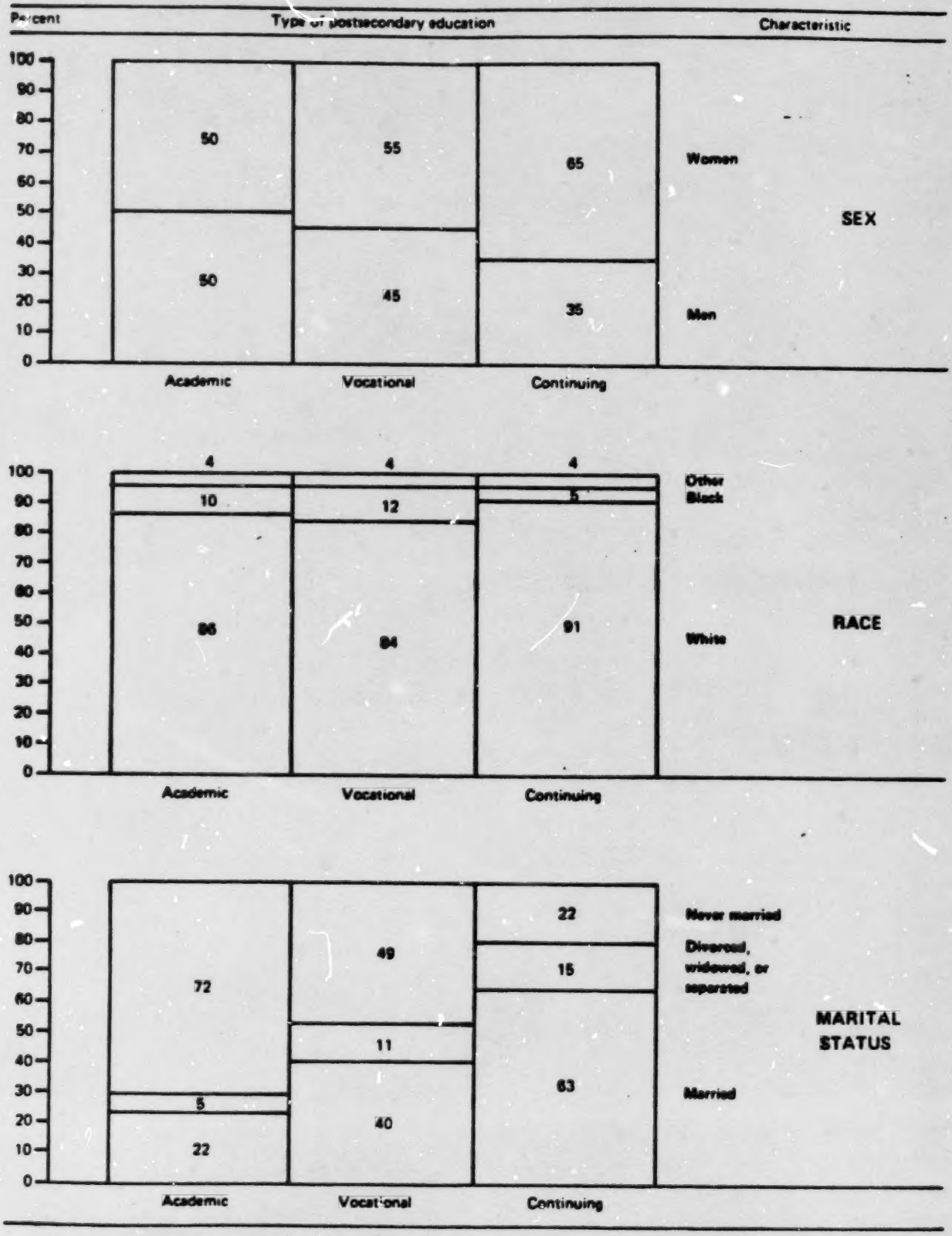
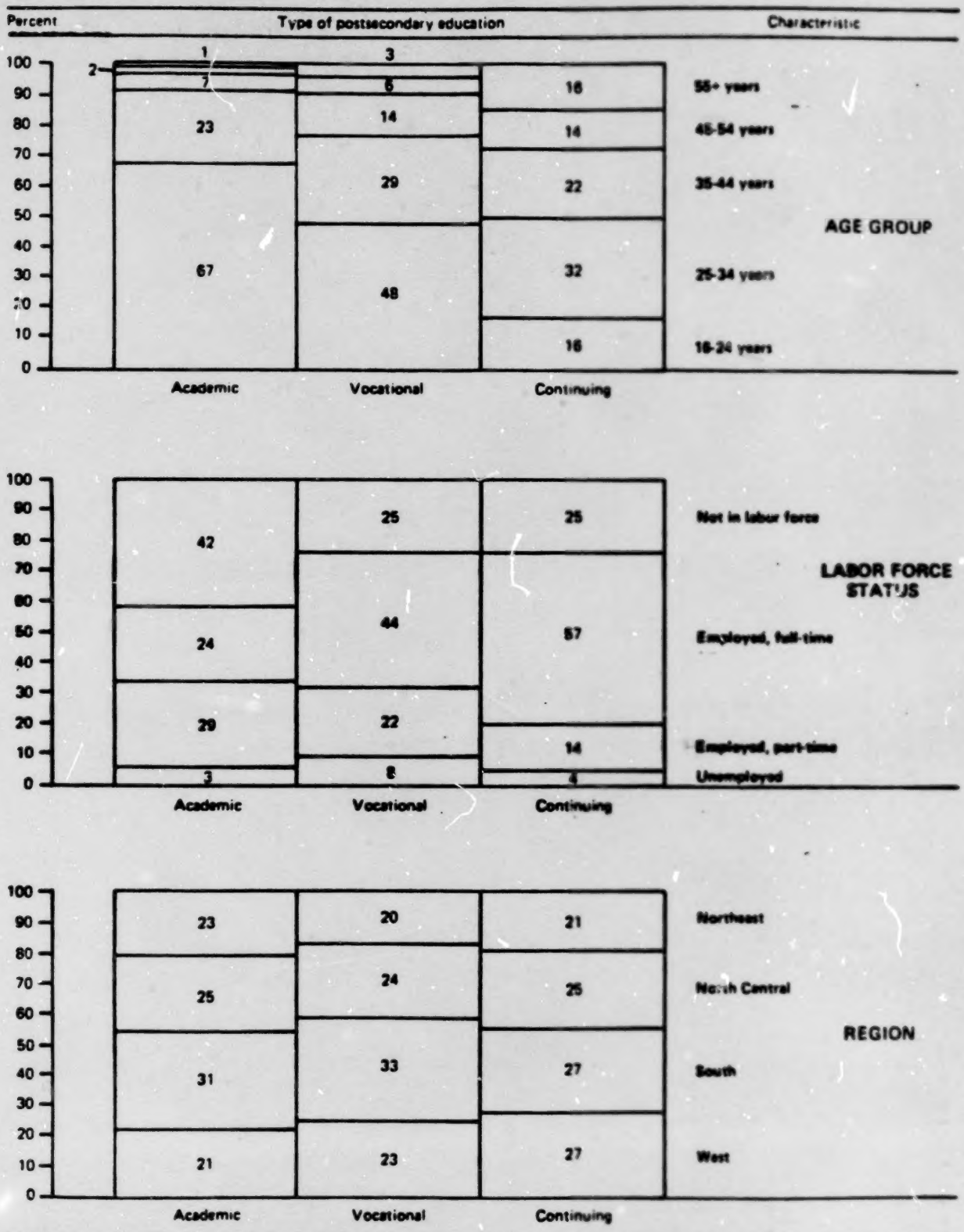


Chart 3. -- Distribution of postsecondary students, by type of education and by sex, race, marital status, age group, labor force status, and geographic region: October 1982 -- continued



Note: Details may not add to total because of rounding.

Participation in the three types of postsecondary education varied considerably by the social and labor force characteristics shown in chart 3. While the number of men and women was about the same in the academic sector, women slightly outnumbered men in vocational education and overwhelmingly outnumbered men in continuing education. Compared with white students, black students were more likely to be involved in vocational education and much less likely to be involved in continuing education. There were also predictable patterns of participation in postsecondary education by age. Generally, as age increased, participation in academic education decreased, while participation in continuing education increased.

Reflective of the age compositions, the overwhelming majority of academic students were single, while the overwhelming majority of continuing education participants were married. In vocational education, the number of persons who had never been married was about the same as the number who were or had been married. In terms of employment characteristics, academic students were quite different from vocational and continuing education students. About two-thirds of the vocational and continuing education participants combined their education with employment, while only about half of the academic students worked while attending college.

For More Information

The appendix tables provide additional data on the characteristics of postsecondary education participants by sex. For further technical information on this report, or to obtain the papers cited in footnote 5 (appendix B), contact Susan Hill, telephone (202) 254-5470.

This report was prepared by Maria Owings (under contract) and Susan Hill, Division of Postsecondary and Vocational Education Statistics. Additional copies are available from the Statistical Information Office, National Center for Education Statistics, Room 600, 1200 19th Street NW., Washington, D.C. 20208, telephone (202) 254-6057.

APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A. -- Tables

Table 1. -- Definitions and numbers of postsecondary education participants, by primary goal or type of education: October 1982

Table 2. -- Participants in postsecondary education, by type of education and region of the United States: October 1982

Table 3. -- Participation in postsecondary education, by sex, age group, race, marital status, and labor force status: October 1982

Table 4. -- Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by race and sex: October 1982

Table 5. -- Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by age group and sex: October 1982

Table 6. -- Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by marital status and sex: October 1982

Table 7. -- Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by labor force status and sex: October 1982

APPENDIX B. -- Source and Reliability of Estimates

Source of the Data
Reliability of Sample Estimates
Standard Error Tables and Their Use

APPENDIX C. -- Survey Form (October 1982 Current Population Survey)

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Appendix A

Table 1.--Definitions and numbers of postsecondary education participants by primary goal or type of education: October 1982

Number (in thousands)		Definition of population
172,882		Total Population Coverage--estimates in this report include all persons 16 years of age and older in the civilian noninstitutionalized population of the United States during October 1982.
18,206		Postsecondary Education Participants--persons who have either completed secondary school or are beyond the age of compulsory education and are involved in any educational activity for the purpose of earning an academic degree or diploma, a vocational degree, certificate or other occupational license, or for personal/job development or social/recreational purpose.
		TYPES OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION PARTICIPANTS:
9,243		Academic Students--postsecondary education participants pursuing coursework, either full- or part-time, which advances them toward an undergraduate, graduate, or professional degree, including:
	1,107	-- students working for associate degrees in a general or an arts and sciences curriculum (which may be partially or completely creditable toward a bachelor's degree);
	6,166	-- students working for bachelor's degrees;
	1,969	-- postbaccalaureate students working for master's, doctor's, or first-professional degrees (M.D., D.D.S., D.V.M., law, etc.);
3,787		Vocational Students--postsecondary education participants taking coursework (either full- or part-time) in an occupational or technical field for the purpose of obtaining a vocational credential, such as a vocational certificate, occupational license, or other vocational diploma or degree, including:

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Appendix A

Table 1.--Definitions and numbers of postsecondary education participants by primary goal or type of education: October 1982--continued

Number (in thousands)	Defined population
1,636	-- students working for associate degrees in programs designed to prepare them for employment in a specific occupational field (i.e., pursuing a terminal occupational degree; coursework may or may not be applicable toward a bachelor's degree);
1,653	-- students working for vocational certificates or awards (i.e., following a nonacademic curriculum requiring from a few months to 3 years of study, often in colleges, business, trade or vocational schools);
498	-- persons taking courses to obtain or renew an occupational license.
5,177	Continuing Education Students--postsecondary education participants not otherwise classified as academic or vocational students who were taking college credit courses but not seeking a degree or who were taking noncredit courses for personal development or social/recreational purposes (excluding adult basic education courses to improve basic skills in reading, writing, or arithmetic). Continuing education participants include:
868	-- persons enrolled in college credit courses which could be applied towards a degree, but who were not presently seeking a degree;
4,308	-- persons taking courses for academic enrichment, general knowledge, personal/job development, or pleasure, not with the intention of obtaining a certificate, diploma, degree, or license.

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Table 2.--Participants in postsecondary education, by type of education and region of the United States: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Region	Total population 16 years and older	Postsecondary participants	Percent of subgroup population participating in postsecondary education
United States	172,882	18,206	10.5
Northeast	38,058	3,984	10.5
North central	43,796	4,504	10.3
South	57,827	5,539	9.6
West	33,201	4,180	12.6

	Number and percent of subgroup population participating in each type of postsecondary education					
	Academic		Vocational		Continuing	
	Number	Percent of pop.	Number	Percent of pop.	Number	Percent of pop.
United States	9,243	5.3	3,787	2.2	5,177	3.0
Northeast	2,155	5.7	766	2.0	1,063	2.8
North central	2,300	5.3	891	2.0	1,312	3.0
South	2,885	5.0	1,268	2.2	1,385	2.4
West	1,902	5.7	862	2.6	1,416	4.3

NOTES.--(1) Details may not add to totals because of rounding.
(2) See chart 1 for the States included in each region.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Table 3.--Participation in postsecondary education, by sex, age group, race, marital status, and labor force status: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Item	Total population		Postsecondary participants		Percent of subgroup population in postsecondary education
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	
Total population* ages 16+	172,882	100.0	18,206	100.0	10.5
Men	81,798	47.3	8,149	44.8	10.0
16-24	17,937	10.4	4,323	23.7	24.1
25-34	18,879	10.9	2,242	12.3	11.9
35-44	13,606	7.9	836	4.6	6.1
45-54	10,710	6.2	400	2.2	3.7
55-64	10,230	5.9	258	1.4	2.5
65+	10,431	6.0	91	0.5	1.0
Women	91,083	52.7	10,057	55.2	11.0
16-24	18,514	10.7	4,567	25.1	24.7
25-34	19,802	11.5	2,648	14.5	13.4
35-44	14,406	8.3	1,430	7.9	9.9
45-54	11,520	6.7	755	4.1	6.6
55-64	11,718	6.8	407	2.2	3.5
65+	15,123	8.7	249	1.4	1.6
White	149,834	86.7	15,863	87.1	10.6
Men	71,367	41.3	7,119	39.1	10.0
Women	78,465	45.4	8,744	48.0	11.1
Black	18,720	10.8	1,622	8.9	8.7
Men	8,333	4.8	640	3.5	7.7
Women	10,387	6.0	982	5.4	9.5
Other	4,322	2.5	720	4.0	16.7
Men	2,093	1.2	390	2.1	18.6
Women	2,230	1.3	330	1.8	14.8

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Table 3.--Participation rates in postsecondary education, by sex, age group, race, marital status, and labor force status: October 1982--continued

(Numbers in thousands)

Item	Total population		Postsecondary participants		Percent of subgroup population in postsecondary education
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	
Married	102,337	59.2	6,874	37.8	6.7
Men	51,206	29.6	2,929	16.1	5.7
Women	51,131	29.6	3,945	21.7	7.7
Divorced, widowed, separated	28,967	16.8	1,659	9.1	5.7
Men	8,126	4.7	380	2.1	4.7
Woman	20,841	12.1	1,279	7.0	6.1
Never married	41,570	24.0	9,673	53.1	23.3
Men	22,460	13.0	4,841	26.6	21.6
Women	19,110	11.1	4,832	26.5	25.3
Not in labor force	62,113	35.9	6,120	33.6	9.9
Men	19,424	11.2	2,493	13.7	12.8
Women	42,688	24.7	3,626	19.9	8.5
Employed full-time	78,586	45.5	6,856	37.7	8.7
Men	48,565	28.1	3,431	18.8	7.1
Women	30,021	17.4	3,424	18.8	11.4
Employed part-time	21,232	12.3	4,259	23.4	20.1
Men	7,631	4.4	1,748	9.6	22.9
Women	13,601	7.9	2,511	13.8	18.5
Unemployed	10,945	6.3	971	5.3	8.9
Men	6,173	3.6	477	2.6	7.7
Women	4,772	2.8	494	2.7	10.4

* Civilian, noninstitutionalized population in the 50 States and the District of Columbia.

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding and because of a small amount of nonresponse on certain items.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Table 4.--Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by race and sex: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Race and sex	Type of postsecondary education					
	Academic		Vocational		Continuing	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
Total.....	9,243	100.0	3,787	100.0	5,177	100.0
Men	4,629	50.1	1,712	45.2	1,808	34.9
Women	4,614	49.9	2,074	54.8	3,368	65.1
White	7,933	85.8	3,199	84.5	4,731	91.4
Men	3,983	43.1	1,488	39.3	1,648	31.8
Women	3,950	42.7	1,711	45.2	3,083	59.6
Black	918	9.9	449	11.9	255	4.9
Men	400	4.3	155	4.1	85	1.6
Women	518	5.6	294	7.8	170	3.3
Other	392	4.2	138	3.6	190	3.7
Men	246	2.7	69	1.8	75	1.4
Women	146	1.6	69	1.8	115	2.2

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Table 5.--Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by age group and sex: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Age group and sex	Type of postsecondary education					
	Academic		Vocational		Continuing	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
Total	9,243	100.0	3,787	100.0	5,177	100.0
16-24	6,208	67.2	1,833	48.4	848	16.4
25-34	2,145	23.2	1,078	28.5	1,667	32.2
35-44	624	6.8	522	13.8	1,121	21.7
45-54	198	2.1	240	6.3	717	13.8
55-64	56	0.6	95	2.5	514	9.9
65+	12	0.1	19	0.5	309	6.0
Men	4,629	100.0	1,712	100.0	1,808	100.0
16-24	3,206	69.3	809	47.3	308	17.0
25-34	1,094	23.6	524	30.6	621	34.3
35-44	233	5.0	213	12.4	391	21.6
45-54	72	1.6	106	6.2	222	12.3
55-64	20	0.4	50	2.9	188	10.4
65+	([1])	([2])	11	0.6	78	4.3
Women	4,614	100.0	2,075	100.0	3,368	100.0
16-24	3,003	65.1	1,024	49.4	540	16.0
25-34	1,049	22.7	554	26.7	1,045	31.0
35-44	391	8.5	309	14.9	730	21.7
45-54	126	2.7	134	6.5	495	14.7
55-64	35	0.8	45	2.2	326	9.7
65+	10	0.2	8	0.4	231	6.9

[1]Less than 1.

[2]Less than 0.05 percent.

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Table 6.--Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by marital status and sex: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Marital status and sex	Type of postsecondary education					
	Academic		Vocational		Continuing	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
Total	9,243	100.0	3,787	100.0	5,177	100.0
Married	2,078	22.5	1,516	40.0	3,280	63.4
Divorced, widowed, or separated ...	492	5.3	408	10.8	760	14.7
Never married ...	6,673	72.2	1,863	49.2	1,137	22.0
Men	4,629	100.0	1,712	100.0	1,808	100.0
Married	980	21.2	745	43.5	1,203	66.5
Divorced, widowed, or separated ...	132	2.9	94	5.5	154	8.5
Never married ...	3,517	76.0	872	50.9	451	24.9
Women	4,614	100.0	2,074	100.0	3,368	100.0
Married	1,098	23.8	770	37.1	2,076	61.6
Divorced, widowed, or separated ...	360	7.8	313	15.1	606	18.0
Never married ...	3,156	68.4	991	47.8	686	20.4

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Appendix A

Table 7.--Distribution of participants in postsecondary academic, vocational, and continuing education, by labor force status and sex: October 1982

(Numbers in thousands)

Labor force status and sex	Type of postsecondary education					
	Academic		Vocational		Continuing	
	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution	Number	Percent distribution
Total	9,243	100.0	3,787	100.0	5,177	100.0
Not in labor force	3,893	42.1	955	25.2	1,271	24.6
Employed full-time	2,236	24.2	1,676	44.3	2,944	56.9
Employed part-time	2,697	29.2	834	22.0	728	14.1
Unemployed	416	4.5	321	8.5	234	4.5
Men	4,629	100.0	1,712	100.0	1,808	100.0
Not in labor force	1,992	43.0	312	18.2	190	10.5
Employed full-time	1,119	24.2	934	54.6	1,378	76.2
Employed part-time	1,292	27.9	321	18.8	135	7.5
Unemployed	227	4.9	145	8.5	105	5.8
Women	4,614	100.0	2,074	100.0	3,368	100.0
Not in labor force	1,902	41.2	644	31.1	1,080	32.1
Employed full-time	1,117	24.2	741	35.7	1,566	46.5
Employed part-time	1,406	30.5	513	24.7	593	17.6
Unemployed	189	4.1	176	8.5	129	3.8

NOTE.--Details may not add to totals because of rounding.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), tabulations from the NCES education supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey conducted by the Bureau of the Census.

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Appendix B. -- Source and Reliability of Estimates

SOURCE OF THE DATA

The estimates on postsecondary education included in this report are based on data collected in October 1982 by the Bureau of the Census for the National Center for Education Statistics in the monthly Current Population Survey (CPS). Although the CPS deals primarily with labor force data for the civilian noninstitutionalized population, NCES sponsored supplemental questions about the school enrollment of all members of the household in October 1982. The household respondent provided information on each household member about their current enrollment or educational activities (see survey form in appendix C).

The CPS sample consisted of 629 primary sampling units comprised of 1,148 counties, independent cities, and minor civil divisions throughout the 50 States and the District of Columbia. The sample was initially selected from the 1970 census files and has been periodically updated to reflect new construction. Of the 60,500 households in the sample, interviews were obtained from 58,000 households. The household respondents provided information on 12,117 persons (unweighted count) participating in postsecondary education.[4] The estimation procedure employed for the CPS data involved the inflation or weighting of sample results to independent estimates of characteristics of the civilian noninstitutional population. This was done by age, sex, and race, and was based on the 1980 decennial census.

Estimates based on this analysis of the October 1982 education supplement of the Current Population Survey (CPS) may differ from estimates reported from other surveys on the various aspects of postsecondary education. This is the result of differences in the definition of the postsecondary education universe and differences in sample and methodological design. In this report, the postsecondary education population was defined as all civilian, noninstitutionalized persons 16 years of age or older who were enrolled (either full- or part-time) in any type of educational activity above the high-school level, or who were taking a course for personal development or enjoyment. Data obtained from institutions would include military personnel as well as institutionalized persons who were enrolled in postsecondary institutions.

The primary objective of this analysis was to provide an unduplicated count of postsecondary education participants, a count not obtainable from institutional surveys. NCES divided postsecondary education participants into three mutually exclusive categories -- academic, vocational, or continuing education. Assignment was made based on the reported objective(s) of a person's postsecondary education: (1) pursuing an academic degree, (2) pursuing a vocational degree, certificate, or license, or (3) taking noncredit courses for personal, job, social, or recreational purposes. In order to avoid classifying a single person into more than one category of postsecondary education (e.g., a college student also taking a continuing education class), precedence was given to academic, then to vocational, then to continuing education. There were approximately 714,000 persons, or 4 percent of the postsecondary education participants, who were involved in more than one type of postsecondary education.

[4] There were an additional 757 persons (unweighted count) reported to be participating in postsecondary education, but for whom no information was provided on their degree objective or reason for participation. Therefore, they could not be included in this analysis.

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These persons were classified into the category given the highest priority. As a result, in this analysis the number of persons reported in continuing education, for example, does not reflect the total number of persons in continuing education, but the number of persons in continuing education who were not also pursuing an academic or vocational credential. This differs from some analyses of postsecondary academic, vocational, or continuing education which base their categories on type of institution or institutional enrollment.[5]

RELIABILITY OF SAMPLE ESTIMATES

Since the estimates reported here were obtained from a sample survey, figures may differ from those obtained from a complete census which used the same procedures, questionnaires, interviewers, and instructions. Sample survey estimates are subject to errors due to both sampling and nonsampling variability.

Nonsampling variability:

The most common sources of nonsampling variability are errors of response and nonreporting. Errors of response may be due to definitional and/or interpretational difficulties, respondent's inability or unwillingness to provide the information, or mistakes made by interviewers or data processors in recording, coding, or processing the data. Nonreporting errors can result when a sample underrepresents certain units or groups in a population, particularly by missing housing units or missing persons within a sampled household. Although it is known that underrepresentation is larger for males than females and larger for non-whites than whites, the full extent of nonsampling error is unknown. Thus, biases may exist in estimates to the extent that missed persons or households differ systematically from persons in similar age-sex-race groups who were actually interviewed.

Sampling variability:

The magnitude of sampling error can be indicated by the standard errors of the estimates, which are primarily measures of the chance variations which occur because a sample rather than an entire population is surveyed. Because of the high cost of deriving individual standard errors for a large number of estimates, generalized standard errors are provided for various types of characteristics. These approximations are not precise standard errors, but give an indication of the magnitude of the standard error of an estimate. Although standard errors may partially measure the effect of some nonsampling errors in response and enumeration, the full extent of nonsampling error is unknown. Care should be exercised in the interpretation of figures based on a relatively small number of cases or on a small difference between estimates.

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[5]It has become increasingly difficult to estimate the number of students in each type of postsecondary education using data obtained from institutions. In the past 25 years, the division between academic institutions and vocational institutions has become increasingly blurred. Many institutions offer more than one type of postsecondary education, e.g., one college may offer vocational and continuing education as well as academic education. This is one reason why the National Center for Education Statistics is currently designing an integration of its current institutional surveys of academic and vocational education into a postsecondary education data system. For more information on this proposed system and the historical processes which have culminated in a need to integrate NCES surveys of postsecondary institutions, see (1) The Design of An Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, and (2) An Historical Analysis of the Changing Universe of Postsecondary Education Institutions Which the Federal Government Has Surveyed. To obtain these papers, contact Susan Hill (see For More Information section).

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STANDARD ERROR TABLES AND THEIR USE

Generalized standard errors of estimated percents are given in the tables below.

TABLE A. -- GENERALIZED STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATED PERCENTS: TOTAL OR WHITE

Base of percent (thousands)	Estimated percent				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
100	2.0	3.1	4.3	6.1	7.1
250	1.3	2.0	2.7	3.9	4.5
500	0.9	1.4	1.9	2.7	3.2
1,000	0.6	1.0	1.3	1.9	2.2
2,500	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.2	1.4
5,000	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.9	1.0
10,000	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.7
25,000	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4
50,000	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3
100,000	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2
150,000	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.2

TABLE B. -- GENERALIZED STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATED PERCENTS: BLACK AND OTHER RACES

Base of percent (thousands)	Estimated percent				
	2 or 98	5 or 95	10 or 90	25 or 75	50
75	2.4	3.8	5.2	7.5	8.7
100	2.1	3.3	4.5	6.5	7.5
250	1.3	2.1	2.9	4.1	4.8
500	0.9	1.5	2.0	2.9	3.4
1,000	0.7	1.0	1.4	2.1	2.4
2,500	0.4	0.7	0.9	1.3	1.5
5,000	0.3	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.1
10,000	0.21	0.3	0.5	0.7	0.8
15,000	0.17	0.27	0.4	0.5	0.6
20,000	0.15	0.23	0.3	0.5	0.5

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The sample estimate and its estimated standard error permit one to construct confidence intervals, i.e., ranges which include the average result of all possible samples with a known probability. For example, if all possible samples were selected, each were surveyed under identical conditions, and an estimate and its estimated standard error were calculated, then:

- Approximately 68 percent of the intervals ranging from one standard error below the estimate to one standard error above the estimate would include the average result of all possible samples.

- Approximately 95 percent of the intervals ranging from two standard errors below the estimate to two standard errors above the estimate would include the average result of all possible samples.

To illustrate, table 3 (appendix A) shows that 10.6 percent of the 149,834,000 white persons age 16 years and older participated in postsecondary education. The estimated standard error shown in table A for this approximate percent and base[6] is 0.1 percent; 2 standards errors is 0.2 percent. Therefore, the 95 percent confidence interval for this percent is from 10.4 to 10.8. In this report, differences between groups were mentioned in the text only if there was a difference between the 95 percent confidence intervals of the two estimates.

[6]For percentages (or bases of percentages) that fall between those categories shown in tables A or B, interpolation may be used.

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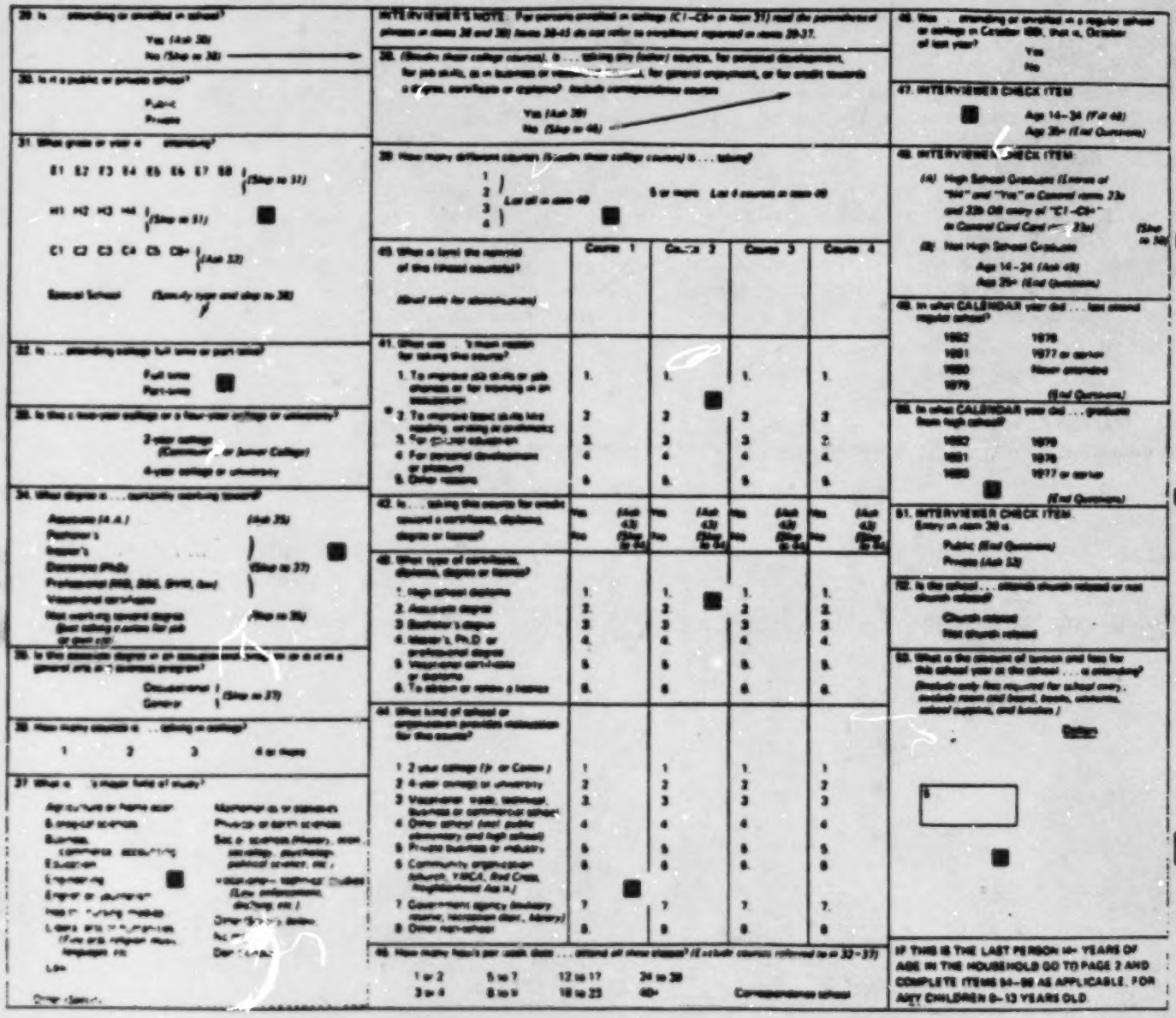
Appendix C--Survey Form

NCES Education Supplement to the October 1982 Current Population Survey



***Persons who chose this response were excluded from the postsecondary universe.**

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